



[Joe Slovo, 1926-1995](#)

SA Working Class and the NDR

In this final part of our “Basics” course, we have looked at democracy, armed struggle, and popular unity-in-action, in terms of various countries of the world. Now we look again at South Africa, in the context of National Democratic Revolution. The NDR is not a South African invention. It is a worldwide phenomenon. But it has generated a specifically South African literature.

Joe Slovo published the [SA Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution](#) (see also the link below, for a shorter version) at a time when he was the General Secretary of the SACP. The Party was still clandestine. The end of its 40-year period of illegality was to come two years later.

Like many political documents, this pamphlet takes shape around a polemical response to contemporary opponents who may no longer be well-remembered (in this case it was the particular “workerists” and compromisers of the time that Slovo mentions on the first page of the document).

But as with the polemics of Marx, Engels and Lenin, in the course of the argument against otherwise long-forgotten foes, Slovo was obliged to set up a fully concrete, rounded assessment of the meaning of the NDR, which still remains today as the best single and definitive text on this matter in South Africa.

Slovo quickly establishes the class-alliance basis of the NDR and quotes Lenin saying that: *“the advanced class ... should fight with... energy and enthusiasm for the cause of the whole people, at the head of the whole people”*. This advanced class is the working class. Slovo goes on to write of the continuity of the NDR and of the institutional organisation that is the bricks-and-mortar of nation-building.

Slovo's document has many possibilities as the basis for a discussion, and that is always our purpose: dialogue.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The South African Working Class and the NDR, 1988, extracts, Slovo.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)

This is the last post in the Basics course.